

The Department of Environmental Quality and its employees would like to share these conservation tips that will help you save money and protect the environment. Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility and we should all chip in to do our part. By working together, we can make a difference.

## BE THE SOLUTION

### 8 WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT DURING THE SHORTEST MONTH THIS YEAR

by Steve Uydess

This story is part of Earth911's "Green Eight" series, where we showcase eight ways to green your life in various areas.

Between the cold, condensation and lack of daylight, February, the shortest of winter months, can sometimes feel like it will never end. And it may seem funny to talk global warming while it's snowing, but mid-winter, when we are busy trying to keep warm and travel through difficult weather conditions is the perfect time to think about reducing our carbon footprint. With all of the technology and resources at your disposal, you won't need those extra days to make a positive environmental impact.

#### 1. Waste Not, Want Not

The bad news is that most people generate plenty of greenhouse gasses needlessly. The good news is that eliminating this waste doesn't require radical lifestyle changes. By taking a few basic steps in the major areas of your life, you can reduce your footprint almost without noticing:

**Around the House:** Check windows, doors, attics and basements for drafts. By sealing leaks and in-

sulating these spaces, you can reduce your CO2 emissions by nearly half a ton each year.

**In the Shower:** Everyone loves the feel of a hot shower or bath after coming in from the cold, but all that hot water takes energy to produce. Keep your showers brief and functional, and save baths for special occasions since they require twice the energy of an efficient shower. Look to install low-flow showerheads that will do the work of saving you water, energy and money for you.

**In the Car:** Drive consistently. Fast stops and starts eat up fuel, and while we all have places to be, driving 55 instead of 75 mph saves you between 20-30 percent in fuel efficiency.

#### 2. Dispose of "Disposable"

The average household generates 4.5 pounds of waste each day, which translates to over a ton of greenhouse gas emissions from landfills each year for one home! Therefore, the more we can divert from the waste stream, the better the carbon savings:

- Use rags instead of paper towels to clean up messes. They can be reused and washed as often as you spill your milk. You can also switch to glass storage containers instead of plastic, which will eventually end up in the landfill. They may cost a bit more, but they will last for years, and you avoid the whole plastics-and-food debate.
- Thrift stores are great places to give quality items another go-round. Whether buying or donating, the adage that one man's junk is another's treasure has never been truer. And items that get a second life keep the landfills free of trash.

- Be sure that the items you want to trash can't be recycled. You may be surprised by just how many things people are putting to new use these days.

### 3. Laundry

Once, Twice, Three Times-a-Maybe

Using your towels a few times instead of washing them every time you shower will not only save money, but cash from your water bill. [www.khasabhotel.net](http://www.khasabhotel.net)

When it's shorts and t-shirt season, our laundry pile may seem sparse, but with all those layers to keep us warm each day the basket can really pile up fast. At five pounds of CO2 per wash/dry cycle, the emissions add up fast. Here are some ways to reduce your winter laundry footprint:

- For outer layers like sweaters and middle layers that neither touch our skin nor get food stains, it makes sense to wear them more than once before washing. For items that aren't worn long, try quick ironing in lieu of a full wash cycle.



- Use cold water for your wash and rinse cycles. Hot water accounts for 90 percent of the energy used by washers, and cold water is usually just as effective.

### 4. Heat Smarter

Keeping warm in your house doesn't have to mean blasting the heat non-stop for five months a year. Since about 25 percent of your energy bill goes toward heating costs, a few simple changes can add up to significant savings:

- Set your thermostats between 65-68 degrees when you are home and wear layers if you're still cool.
- Turn your thermostat down to 55 when you aren't home and at night when you're snug in bed.
- If you dread the prospect of rising to a freezing house, then getting a programmable thermostat is a great option. Set it to warm up the house just as you wake. Heating your home by zone is another great way to heat more efficiently.

### 5. Let There Be Light

With the daylight still fading by late afternoon, now is the perfect time to replace your incandescent bulbs with more energy efficient alternatives:

- CFLs: Installing just 5 compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) can reduce your CO2 emissions by about 500 pounds per year.
- LEDs: Although more expensive than CFLs, LED lights last up to five times longer. Even better, they are not affected by cold temperatures, which can limit the brightness of CFL bulbs, so they make a great long-lasting choice for outdoor lighting.
- Check out the new Vu1 bulbs that will be released in the coming months. They provide the efficiency of a CFL without the mercury.

## 6. Taking the “Car” Out of Carbon Footprint

People are less likely to walk or use public transportation in the chilly winter months, but there are still easy ways to limit the emissions generated by your vehicle:

- Carpool to work, whenever possible. Even if you catch a ride to work one day a week, that’s a 20 percent reduction in your annual work-related carbon emissions
- Keep your car tuned-up regularly, including tire pressure. A well-tuned car can run up to 30 percent more efficiently, which saves both carbon and cash, which is one of many ways to drive smart.

## 7. Keep the Glass Coming

Recycling is always a good idea, and with the Super Bowl already kicking off the month, I’m sure there is already plenty of fodder in your bins. But recycling glass is particularly effective, because it saves carbon emissions in two ways:

Recycled glass takes a bite out of greenhouse gas emissions. - Rabbittrecycling.co.uk

- First, the melting of limestone and soda ash (two of the raw materials in glass) releases CO<sub>2</sub>. Melting down cullet (ground glass from recycling collection), produces no CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Second, cullet melts at a lower temperature than the raw materials required for virgin glass, so it takes much less energy to produce recycled glass than the new product. Taking into account the energy needed to mine and transport raw materials, using recycled glass saves about 600 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per ton of glass melted.

## 8. Don’t Let That Food Go to Waste

Composting helps reduce carbon emissions in several ways. First, it keeps food, and the methane it will

produce, out of the landfill. Second, organic compost reduces the need for petro-chemical fertilizers, which use fossil fuels in their refinement and distribution. You can compost a number of ways, from a pile in your backyard to a tub of worms in your basement. Either way, the carbon savings will add up quickly.

**Tips provided by: [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com) and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality staff.**